



**Homeland  
Security**

*Privacy Office, Mail Stop 0655*

March 21, 2019

**SENT VIA E-MAIL TO: 70369-06045942@requests.muckrock.com**

Matthew Topic  
MuckRock News  
DEPT MR 70369  
411A Highland Ave  
Somerville, MD 02144-2516

Re: **2019-HQFO-00519**

Dear Mr. Topic:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) FOIA Office, dated March 18, 2019, and to your request for expedited handling and a waiver of all assessable FOIA fees. Our office received your request on March 19, 2019. Specifically, you requested 1) reports, studies, and other such records from Jan. 1, 2017 to the date of search analyzing or discussing the amount of annual funding needed to improve compliance with the Freedom of Information Act; AND 2) emails, memos, and other such records in which FOIA staff have requested additional resources and the discussions of and responses to those requests.

For item one of your request, the Privacy Office will perform a search for records. For item two of your request, we would need more information before we can conduct an adequate search.

Your request for expedited treatment is hereby denied.

Under the DHS FOIA regulations, expedited processing of a FOIA request is warranted if the request involves "circumstances in which the lack of expedited treatment could reasonably be expected to pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of an individual," 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(e)(1)(i); "an urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged federal government activity, if made by a person who is primarily engaged in disseminating information," 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(e)(1)(ii); "the loss of substantial due process rights," 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(e)(1)(iii); or "a matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government's integrity which affect public confidence," 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(e)(1)(iv). Requesters seeking expedited processing must submit a statement explaining in detail the basis for the request, and that statement must be certified by the requester to be true and correct pursuant to 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(e)(3).

Your request for expedited processing is denied because you do not qualify under any category pursuant to 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(e)(1). You have not established that lack of expedited treatment in this case will pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of an individual. You have not established the loss of substantial due process rights. While you may be primarily engaged in the dissemination of information, you have not detailed with specificity why you feel there is an urgency to inform the public about FOIA funding. Qualifying urgency would need to exceed the public's right to know about government activity generally. You also did not offer sufficient supporting evidence of an interest of the public greater than the public's general interest in FOIA funding. Finally, you did not establish this is a matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government's integrity which affect public confidence. Your letter was conclusory in nature and did not present any facts to justify a grant of expedited processing under the applicable standards.

Due to the increasing number of FOIA requests received by this office, we may encounter some delay in processing your request. Consistent with 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(a) of the DHS FOIA regulations, the Department processes FOIA requests according to their order of receipt. Although DHS' goal is to respond within 20 business days of receipt of your request, FOIA does permit a 10-day extension of this time period in certain circumstances under 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(c). As your request seeks documents that will require a thorough and wide-ranging search, DHS will invoke a 10-day extension for your request pursuant to 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.5(c). If you would like to narrow the scope of your request, please contact our office. We will make every effort to comply with your request in a timely manner.

You have requested a fee waiver. The DHS FOIA regulations at 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.11(k) set forth six factors DHS must evaluate to determine whether the applicable legal standard for a fee waiver has been met: (1) Whether the subject of the requested records concerns "the operations or activities of the government," (2) Whether the disclosure is "likely to contribute" to an understanding of government operations or activities, (3) Whether disclosure of the requested information will contribute to the understanding of the public at large, as opposed to the individual understanding of the requester or a narrow segment of interested persons, (4) Whether the contribution to public understanding of government operations or activities will be "significant," (5) Whether the requester has a commercial interest that would be furthered by the requested disclosure, and (6) Whether the magnitude of any identified commercial interest to the requester is sufficiently large in comparison with the public interest in disclosure, that disclosure is primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.

Upon review of the subject matter of your request, and an evaluation of the six factors identified above, DHS has determined that it will conditionally grant your request for a fee waiver. The fee waiver determination will be based upon a sampling of the responsive documents received from the various DHS program offices as a result of the searches conducted in response to your FOIA request. DHS will, pursuant to DHS FOIA regulations applicable to non-commercial requesters, provide two hours of search time and process the first 100 pages at no charge to you. If upon review of these documents, DHS determines that the disclosure of the information contained in those documents does not meet the factors permitting DHS to waive the fees, then DHS will at that time either deny your request for a fee waiver entirely, or will allow for a percentage reduction in the amount of the fees corresponding to the amount of relevant material found that

meets the factors allowing for a fee waiver. In either case, DHS will promptly notify you of its final decision regarding your request for a fee waiver and provide you with the responsive records as required by applicable law.

In the event that your fee waiver is denied, and you determine that you still want the records, provisions of the FOIA allow us to recover part of the cost of complying with your request. We shall charge you for records in accordance with the DHS FOIA regulations as they apply to non-commercial requesters. As a non-commercial requester you will be charged for any search time and duplication beyond the free two hours and 100 pages mentioned in the previous paragraph. You will be charged 10 cents per page for duplication and search time at the per quarter-hour rate (\$4.00 for clerical personnel, \$7.00 for professional personnel, \$10.25 for managerial personnel) of the searcher. In the event that your fee waiver is denied, we will construe the submission of your request as an agreement to pay up to \$25.00. This office will contact you before accruing any additional fees.

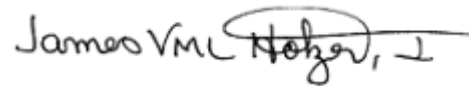
For item one of your request, we have queried the appropriate component(s) of DHS for responsive records. If any responsive records are located, they will be reviewed for determination of releasability. Please be assured that one of the analysts in our office will respond to your request as expeditiously as possible. We appreciate your patience as we proceed with your request.

After careful review of item two, we determined that your request is too broad in scope or did not specifically identify the records which you are seeking. Records must be described in reasonably sufficient detail to enable government employees who are familiar with the subject area to locate records without placing an unreasonable burden upon the agency. For this reason, 6 C.F.R. Part 5 §5.3(b) of the DHS FOIA regulations require that you describe the records you are seeking with as much information as possible to ensure that our search can locate them with a reasonable amount of effort. Whenever possible, a request should include specific information about each record sought, such as the date, title or name, author, recipients, and subject matter of the records, if known, or the DHS component or office you believe created and/or controls the record. The FOIA does not require an agency to create new records, answer questions posed by requesters, or attempt to interpret a request that does not identify specific records.

Your request has been assigned reference number **2019-HQFO-00519**. Please refer to this identifier in any future correspondence. The status of your FOIA request is now available online and can be accessed at: <https://www.dhs.gov/foia-status>, by using this FOIA request number. Status information is updated daily. Alternatively, you can download the DHS eFOIA Mobile App, the free app is available for all Apple and Android devices. With the DHS eFOIA Mobile App, you can submit FOIA requests or check the status of requests, access all of the content on the FOIA website, and receive updates anywhere, anytime.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this matter, please feel free to contact this office at 1-866-431-0486 or 202-343-1743.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James VML Holzer, J". The signature is written in a cursive style, with "James" and "Holzer" being more legible than "VML". There is a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

James Holzer  
FOIA Program Specialist